FICTION BY THE BEST WRITERS

THE EYES WITH SORROW

BY LUCILLE BALDWIN VAN SLYKE

Tommy O'Brien, aged ten, dearly loved to awe all the new children who moved into his part of Dix Street with the uncanny tale of "de nutty lady wot lives in de swell end of de street."

"I tells you wot I does," promised Tommy generously. "Thoisday I goes me up Dix Street wid de wash—'nd Nuzly, youse can help fetch 'nd likely youse will get a squint at her—she

"AN' THE LEETLE BABEE THAD GO DEAD? THE NUTTY LADEE DON' FORGE-ET HEEM?"

cheerfully toiled six weary Saturdays, washing floors for the Dutch baker lady, while Antar fretted unceasingly in a sticky keg with a label that guaranteed the contents to be "twenty-five lbs. net, strictly pure currant jell." The Dutch baker lady had not parted with the precious vehicle cheaply by any means, nor until the springs of the wreck refused to support the weight of her own pudgy offspring.

But to Nazileh's eyes it was wonderful, its sides were still shiny with the gummy varnish daubed upon it by the "Jew second hander" who had sold it to Mrs. Schmidt; its guard straps were still sticky from the sweets that the O'Brien baby had lavished upon them before he became a good "walker." Mrs. O'Brien had fairly wept when she sold it to the "second hander."

"You'll niver have the like of this in yer shop again, Mister Solom'n," she assured him; "'t was the rich as bought it—'nd havin' lost their young. God rest his pretty soul, they give me the buggy for me own that's the age of one they lost—you're fair robbin' a poor dead baby by payin' no more for it."

It was certainly true that the poor battered cart did retain, somehow, something of its former smartness. The glory of the collapsible hood that would no longer collapse, the wonderful rattle of the wheels, with the rubber almost rotted from the tires, were things to be very proud of; but best of all was the little gilded monogram on the footboard, much tarnished to be sure, but still a memory of the first wee occupant. Nazileh puzzled a great deal over the involved curves of the old English lettering, it was much prettier than that in the school book, almost as pretty as the graceful Arabic that her grandfather taught her to love.

Antar nearly wore the skin from his dimpled fingers trying to pull the pretty gilt trifles away. While he pulled he made soft, adorable baby noises; Nazileh solemnly believed he was "readin' the nice story," and if his seraphic smile meant anything he surely read a very happy tale.

In her rapture over the cart and its beloved occupant she began to move away from her friends without any consciousness of their being. She smiled dreamily as she strutted between the handle bars and the dilapidated hood; the handles were far too wobbly to trust going down grade. She was pretending that she was a very rich lady taking her own little boy to a wonderful confectioner's shop where she was going to buy him a large thick handful of fuzzy spun sugar candy and a little round mamoul with figs inside.

Tommy sighed heavily as he gazed after her.

"Dat's a date for Thoisday," he screamed, "youse remember to hand around, Nuzly."

"I leeke thad I go," called Nazileh

Geraldine drooped despondently.

"Haindt you going to take me, too, Tommy?" she asked.

And Tommy rose scornfully.

"Don't butt in," he advised bruskly, "'nd youse won't get trun down."

On Thursday, cheerfully tugging at one handle of the clothes basket, for perhaps after all it was not only love that had moved Tommy to ask her, Nazileh took her first journey to the up-town end of Dix Street. Her darkly fringed eyes opened wider and wider as she stared at the bits of lawn and at shining houses whose windows, "efery one haf lace—same keen' pattern thad othairs weendow haf," and when they finally reached the charming old corner guarded by high brick walls she drew a deep breath.

"Tommee-oó-breen," she asked softly, "ees thad nutty ladee the ladee of a sultan or a beg?"

"A what?"

"A reech mans—leeke thad you call preeseeden' or melonairs?"

"Nope," he replied, "she hain't, but I bet you any money he could be a nalderman if he'd get out in de district—he's de goods, he is."

Around the corner at the big gateway they put down the basket and Tommy reached up for the bell.

The boy peered cautiously through the gratings.

"Squint," he ordered tersely. "She's there."

Nazileh nodded, too awestricken for words; she shivered as she stepped close to the ornamental bars and then she looked for the first time at the "nutty" lady.

Slender and drooping, sitting listlessly in a great willow chair, white fingers twisting a bit of gay ribbon, gray eyes staring at nothing at all——

Nazileh drew a long sighing breath, her expressive little hands flew to her heart.

"Allah mus' sen' thee tears, lofely ladee," she whispered, her own dark eyes filled with sadness, "Allah, mus', lofely ladee, weeth eyes of sorrow!"

"Gee!" gasped Tommy as the maid opened the gate, "cut it out! Nuzly, youse looks nutty yourself!"

Often in the days that followed the little Syrian sat brooding over the recollection of that drooping woman. Once she caught up Antar and hugged him so closely that he squealed all his funny little Oriental squeals.

"Don' you go dead, an' make me nutty," she whispered passionately; "me—eef you do thad I weel sla-ap you good, leeke that bad Dootch ladee sla-ap thad bad Dootch babee!"

And once at night, when she lay awake watching the wonderful stars, she made a little prayer, stretching out her hands as she had seen Father Shiskim, the priest, do, when he prayed.

"Eef you please, Allah," she murmured, "I leeke thad you take a leetle time—jus' leetle, to sen' thad lofely

of their clean linen. There came a last he succeeded; a tiny gilt letter Thursday when Tommy slipped away was loose in his dimpled hand.

"Ah! Ah! Ate!" he squealed.

The staring eyes were very bright now, they wandered searchingly about the pretty garden, and finally they saw the waving baby hand.

She dragged herself out of the chair

"NUZLY, DOES YOUSE KNOW WHERE ME BOY TOM WINT?"

"Nuzly!" she cried from her basement window, and Nazileh, drilled with an Oriental sense of obedience to one's elders, flew with a swiftness that belied her languid grace. "Nuzly, does youse know where me boy Tom wint?"

Nazileh's dark lashes drooped on her olive-tinted cheek.

"Me—I am mos' sad thad I nod know," she answered evasively.

"Wait till I get my hands on 'im," promised Mrs. O'Brien ardently, "wait till I do."

Nazileh waited patiently; waiting comes easily to Syrians. "Whad ees eet thad you wan'?" she asked politely.

"I want these sheets carried oop the street to the big house," answered Mrs. O'Brien, with many loquacious details of why she wanted them carried and what she would do to her son for not carrying them and generally speaking what she thought of a boy who had inherited such lax tendencies from his father.

"Thad 'ouse weeth the nutty ladee?" queried Nazileh breathlessly. "Me, I weel take thad theengs for you."

"You're all right, if you are a dago," Mrs. O'Brien answered effusively as she handed the bundle to the child; "God bliss ye, it's not your fault that you is one."

"Oxcuse," murmured Nazileh politely, "I ees nod da-ago. Me, I ees come from Ian' of Syree-ah!"

Halfway down the block she paused thoughtfully.

"Me—I go geet Antar, he weel ride an' carry the theengs," she decided.

Presently she was once more journeying uptown with the sheets carefully tucked in the foot of the battered perambulator, and Antar, drowsily singing himself to sleep, safely strapped to the cushions.

She arrived at the great iron gates quite breathless, but when she reached she could not quite touch the bell. She could see the "lofely ladee" sitting in her willow chair. This time the chair was very near the graveled path that led to the doorway of the house. Just as the child reached for the bell the nurse disappeared within the house. The gate was not quite fast; Nazileh pushed it open softly and pulled the perambulator inside, and then, when she had fixed the rickety brake, she started cautiously down the path with the bundle of sheets, tiptoeing when she passed the lady, but the lady never looked, she sat staring at nothing at all, twisting a bit of gay ribbon in her white fingers.

Antar was not quite asleep; presently he sat up and gurgled with surprise; he did not like to sit still in his wonderful perambulator; he wanted to move. His fingers fumbled at the handle of the brake; it jiggled delightfully. The graveled path sloped gently toward the lady, the brake clicked itself loose from the fat little fingers, and the cart rolled smoothly down the path toward the drooping woman.

But the woman did not see; her eyes were, indeed, "blind with sorrow."

Antar sighed softly, then he leaned over the straps and began his old game of playing with the little gilt monogram on the footboard.

"Ate-un-um," he gurgled, very much as any baby gurgles, "a-ah—a-ah—" he sang contentedly.

The drooping woman lifted her head, she seemed to be listening, she frowned a little, she was very thoughtful.

Antar gave an extra hard pull. At

woman with closed eyes into the house.

In her terror she pushed the rickety perambulator home so fast that Antar bounced about in an ecstasy of baby glee, and all the while he hid in his fat little hand a dingy gilt letter "N."

All through that afternoon and far into that awful night a little girl tried to forget those white, shut eyes; all through a dreadful morning in the school-room she hid her face in her hands and would not speak. And when noon came she could endure it no longer, but dragged herself up Dix Street and stared through a great iron gateway.

The fountain was there and the pretty chairs, just as they had been yesterday, but this time there was only a man sitting under the trees.

After a long time Nazileh called to him.

"Meester," she cried softly and despairingly, "I leeke thad you please tell ad me—thad lofely ladee—that nutty ladee—ees she go dead leeke her leetle babee?"

The man got up and went over to the gate quickly.

The little girl dragged out her question once more.

"The ladee—the pretty ladee——"

The man swung the gate wide.

"Are you the one who brought that baby here?" he asked.

Nazileh nodded.

And then the man did a very strange thing; he caught her in his arms and kissed her.

"God bless you, child," he whispered throatily; "she isn't dead and—and she isn't going to be 'nutty' any more, she's going to get well—just think of that!"

Nazileh struggled to her feet, her dark eyes lifted themselves very sweetly.

"Thad is mos' nice of Allah," she said, "he haf sen' thad geeft of tears—jus' to weep away thad sorrow—thad eyes thad was weeth sorrow. Me, I am mos'—mos' nutty weeth gladness—the lofely ladee!"

And suddenly, shyness overtook her. She made the pretty Syrian obeisance as her mother had taught her, touching her heart, her lips and her head with her slender hand and then she whirled about swiftly and fled through the gateway.

And as she ran she sang a funny little sobbing song under her breath t

For did he not know all the thrilling details of the lady's "nuttiness"? Was not his own mother intimately connected through her profession (she was a laundress) with the entire affair?

But when little Nazileh Sowaya heard the story, only half comprehending Tommy's vernacular, her lovely dusky eyes asked myriad questions that her faltering English could not express.

Geraldine Schmidt, who had heard the story before and always treated the entire affair with maddening Teutonic indifference, made a stolid attempt to elucidate Tommy's narrative.

"She aindt regular bughouse, Nuzly," she explained while Nazileh groped for the meaning of the word "nutty"; "she don't throw no fits, yet, nor she don't makes it that she kills nobody—she's yust nutty."

"Oxcuse thad I ask," murmured the little Syrian perplexedly, "whad ees eet thad you call boog 'ouse?"

Tommy and Geraldine eyed their friend with pitying disgust. "Gee," exploded Tommy, "ain't I never goin' to loirn youse N' Yoik talk?"

"Oxcuse," murmured Nazileh penitently, "me, I theenk you haf nod tell thees ad me, thees thad you call"—her voice wavered but with Oriental patience she made the attempt, "thees—you jus' call wo-orm 'ouse."

And when Tommy had recovered from the noisy mirth into which Nazileh's attempt at idiom had thrust him, he made one last gigantic effort at explanation.

"Bughouse is being so nutty dat dey has to chuck youse in Mattywan—de lady hain't got dat bad yet, but she don't notice nothing 'nd she don't know nobody she ust to 'nd de gent has a nurse goil wid a white cap a-stayin' wid her all de time."

"An' the leetle babee thad go dead? The nutty ladee don' forge-et heem?" Nazileh demanded, hugging her baby brother so close that he beat her with his dimpled fists.

"Dat's wot I'm tellin' youse," reiterated Tommy for the twentieth time; "after de kid goes dead de lady goes off her nut—'nd den's de time de gent gives me mudder all de swell clothes 'nd de buggy 'nd t'ings dat dey has for de dead kid. Me mudder'd show you some of de clothes yet, but de buggy we sells 'count of me kid brother is a good walker now."

Nazileh sighed. She had hoped it would be a nice story; all the stories she heard were treasures to carry home to Umn Antar, her mother, and Abu Asaad, her grandfather, to tell them while they counted laces in the twilight. But her sensitive heart knew that this story of the "nutty" lady was far too sorrowful to tell those sad-eyed people.

sit in de back yard—de gent has it fixed up awful swell for her. Gee, its on de corner 'nd dey's a bunch of trees around—he's got a swell fence made up high out of bricks 'nd all around de top of de fence is jugs wid vegetables growin' in 'em 'nd dey's a swell gate 'nd inside"—his voice dropped impressively, "inside dat gate dey's a fountain squirtin' 'nd a bunch of chairs around 'nd de nurse goil sits a-watchin' de nutty lady 'nd de nutty lady sits a-watchin' nothin'——"

At last Nazileh began to comprehend.

"Me—I know," she interrupted eagerly, "thad ladee—she haf the eyes weeth sorrow—she nod see? Ees that nod whad you call nutty? Me, I know those eyes weeth sorrow—on a time thad my fathaire ees keel my mothaire mos' nearlee haf those keen' of eyes! Eef a ladee haf a sorrow in her heart"—Nazileh's slender hands were pressed against her dingy dress and her dark eyes were wide with horror—"an' she hold thad sorrow mooch too tight een her heart an' nod let eet come from her eyes weeth tears—by an by thad eyes ees all blind weeth sorrow—eet ees a theeng ver' sad."

"Honest, did yer mudder get it?" demanded Tommy eagerly.

Nazileh nodded slowly.

"She haf eet; she nod nevaire talk; she nod nevaire smile; she nod nevaire cry; she look thees way"—the little girl's eyes stared blankly and her mouth drooped—"but come a time Allah sen' to her thad geeft of tears, an' thad sorrow—whad you theenk, thad sorrow ees weep out of her eyes—nod all," Nazileh sighed, "but mos' all an' then she ees speak with me, her daughtaire, an' weeth Antar, thees babee, an' weeth all peoples thad she haf know—onlee but she weel nod speak about thad sorrow—eet ees thad my fathaire ees keel."

"Gee," said Tommy thoughtfully, "I don't want dat for mine! De lady, she's got it good 'nd plenty! It's de real t'ing—she don't know nuthin'—wait till youse sees her—she won't let on she sees youse—she looks right t'ro youse."

The baby wailed fretfully. Nazileh lifted him from the curbstone to put him in his perambulator.

"Thees babee," she panted proudly, "ees grow leeke the cole waggin'—so mooch he weigh—eef I nod haf thees cart——"

The "cole waggin'" was sucking his sister's neck so lovingly that she could not talk for joy. When his moist caress was ended she plumped him on the shabby cushions and clapped her hands.

"Ate! Ate!" she cried. "Who haf a ride leeke a reech babee? Antar, Antar Sowaya, mos' bes' nice babee een Ameer-ca! Een a perahmboolate!"

For the perambulator was the pride of her heart. To obtain it she had

"TOMMEE-OO-BREEN, EES THAD NUTTY LADEE . . . LEEKE THAD YOU CALL PREESEEDEN' OR MELONAIRS?"

politely; "eet ees mos' keen thad you ask me, Tommee-oó-breen."

"Gee!" murmured the love-stricken Tommy, "dat goil's got de swellest manner in dis whole town—I wouldn't mind takin' her anywheres."

ladee the geeft of tears—to take away thad eyes of sorrow, please, amen."

If Tommy O'Brien had not been a young man of many affairs, his mother's customers would have certainly enjoyed a more prompt delivery

"SHE DRAGGED HERSELF OUT OF THE CHAIR AND KNELT BY THE BATTERED OLD PERAMBULATOR

A frightened nurse flew across the garden, a man-servant hurriedly pushed the little cart with the laughing baby down the path, and Nazileh came out of the kitchen doorway just in time to see them carrying a white, limp

the same little tune that she often sang to Antar:

"The lofely ladee—" she sang,
"The lofely ladee
Me, I lofe the lofely ladee!"